

EMBASSY UPDATES

NEWSLETTER FOR U.S. CITIZENS IN KOSOVO



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Spotlight on USAID Office of Economic Growth

All of United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) assistance programs, not just here in Kosovo, but throughout the world, are intended to build our partner country's self-sufficiency. The Office of Economic Growth puts this in action.

Background

In 2020, the United States signed a new agreement with Kosovo that will guide our work in the coming years. For the next five years, the United States will help the Government of Kosovo (GOK) and Kosovo citizens become architects of their own development. To achieve this, USAID is partnering with the GOK, civil society, the private sector, donors, and various communities via two main objectives: to promote government accountability and leverage new democratic and economic opportunities for all of Kosovo's citizens. In alignment with USAID's overarching goal, the Office of Economic Growth is split into three teams -- private sector engagement, youth development, and energy. These three areas have been identified as providing the greatest potential to drive Kosovo forward in creating its own opportunities for economic growth.



Photo courtesy of USAID Embassy Pristina.

Private Sector Engagement

The private engagement team is helping businesses to see their role as a catalyst for Kosovo's

The U.S. Embassy Consular Section is open for appointments only two days a week until further notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The only way to make an appointment is to email PristinaACS@state.gov. Should you have an emergency, please email PristinaACS@state.gov or call +381 338 59 59 30 01.



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development. Part of this is looking for opportunities outward, and USAID is pushing our partners to better integrate within the EU and the region. The team has identified three new potential areas for increased competitiveness in exports: wood processing, Information Communication Technology, and food processing. As farming is still a mainstay of Kosovo's economy, the team is working with new and existing agro-businesses to specialize in boutique crops such as asparagus, berries, and herbs that have small footprints but high profits.



Photo courtesy of USAID Embassy Pristina.
energy.

Youth Development

The youth development team works closely with schools, businesses, and organizations across Kosovo so that youth from all backgrounds have the skills needed to join the workforce, and take advantage of not only economic opportunities, but opportunities to participate democratically in their communities and become leaders in their country too. The team manages activities that facilitate adding soft skills to education -- the life skills of leadership, teamwork, and negotiation. The team is also working on the gender gap in professions by providing the technical skills for young females to compete in the male-dominated fields of ICT, wood processing, and

Energy

The energy team is creating exciting, new opportunities with Kosovo businesses through sustainable and renewable energy projects and encouraging our partners to tackle climate change and meet EU environmental standards toward renewable energy. The team is also actively promoting the inclusion of women in this important sector.

Return To The US On Your Expired Passport

As of May, 21, 2021, U.S. citizens can use their expired U.S. passports to return to the United States through December 31, 2021. This applies only to U.S. citizens whose passports expired on or after January 1, 2020.

Expired passports cannot be used to travel from the United States to an international destination or to travel to a foreign country for any length of stay longer than an airport connection in route to the United States or United States territory.

U.S. citizen travelers can use an expired passport if they are currently abroad seeking to return to the United States, they are flying directly to the United States, a United States territory, or have only short-term transit through a foreign country. Moreover, the expired passport must be undamaged and in their possession and was originally valid for 10 years. Or, if they were 15 years of age or under when the passport was issued, their expired passport was originally valid for 5 years.

Order of the Dragon

The Order of the Dragon is a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Gracanica, but it's not like your usual NGO. Instead of focusing on the present, the Order of the Dragon brings back the 14th through 17th centuries in its re-enactments and festivals. For the past several years, it has put on the SHIELD festival at the King Michael elementary school in June. This year, it will be opening up a new facility with the SHIELD festival in August or September.

The SHIELD festival invites visitors to immerse themselves in medieval combat, craft, and society. One can learn how to throw an axe, shoot an arrow, or throw a spear. Several demonstration duels show how combat was conducted during this time – but without the injuries.

The new grounds, just fifty meters from the Gracanica Monastery, are enclosed and house a forge, a children's play area, a tower museum, a sparring area, a weapon throwing/archery area, and a coffee bar/tavern. The grounds will be available for private events and open to the public on weekends.

The Order of the Dragon is affiliated with the Historical Medieval Battle International Association, an organization that brings together medieval re-enactors to stage competitions in archery, sword fighting, combat, costume, and other aspects of medieval life. They hold annual camps, called the Battle of the Nations, in various European countries. A few years ago, the HMBIA US division (the Armored Combat League) started helping produce a show called Knight Fight on the History Channel.

The Order of the Dragon is looking for members! Whether



Photo courtesy of Order of the Dragon.



Photo courtesy of Order of the Dragon.



Photo courtesy of Order of the Dragon.



Photo courtesy of Order of the Dragon.

you are an interested novice or an experienced archer, combatant, blacksmith, or craftsperson willing to share your knowledge, you are welcome to join. Contact [Boban Petrovic](#) for details.



School is Easy

TUTORING

Tutoring services in Kosovo have historically been from the subject teachers at the school the child goes to. While this may suit many children, sometimes it's a different approach that's needed instead of more time and practice in the same way. Enter School Is Easy Tutoring, founded in Pristina by Bethany Owens.



Photo courtesy of Bethany Owens.

School Is Easy is an international company that provides in person and online tutoring in the U.S., UK, Canada, and now Kosovo. Ms. Owens opened this franchise in October 2020 after seeing the need for professional, one on one instruction in the country. She comes to this enterprise after having earned degrees in criminal justice and English; served in the armed forces; and taught English at an international school.

Tutoring is a curriculum supplement, not an additional course nor a substitute for school. It's a private lesson after school for pay. The tutor may be able to explain concepts in a way the teacher was unable to, using a learning mode unavailable in a classroom setting. A bond develops between tutor and student, allowing a more nuanced and personalized experience. Parents, too, receive reports after every

lesson detailing the concepts covered and the progress made. School Is Easy will also work with the school to further aid the child's learning experience, but only with the permission of the parents.

Before assigning a student to a tutor, Ms. Owens personally meets with the parents and child, assessing wants, needs, and expectations. She also learns their personalities to find the perfect fit for the family. Most of her clients are local families, but she also has several international ones.

There are currently ten part time tutors on staff. They speak Albanian and English, and are thoroughly vetted before hiring. Tutors are paid a generous hourly rate, but do not receive benefits due to their part time status. Current tutoring services include science, history, math, English, social studies, history and Albanian subject content. Recommendations for special services due to struggles of learning disabilities or possible psychological hindrances are made if the tutor or administrator notices them in the course of tutoring. Tutors are not substitutes for psychological or special education professionals. Ms. Owens decided to buy into the School Is Easy franchise because it gave her the benefit of tracking software, English language marketing, and experience professionals in tutoring and administration to lean on. She has a weekly meeting with other franchise owners and headquarters, which give her a support system and an exchange of solutions to business problems.

If you're looking to up your child's academic game, contact School Is Easy.

Pristina Mission Diversity and Inclusion Council



Photo courtesy of Diversity and Inclusion Council.

Embassy Pristina's Diversity and Inclusion Council was founded in July 2020 as a means to foster an environment on shared U.S. and Kosovo values dedicated to increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion goals and principles within the Mission and the wider community. The Council currently has 21 members, with American and Kosovan staff members serving as co-chairpersons.

The Council identified three priorities areas – People, Culture, and Mission. Our Culture subcommittee focuses on fostering a culture of diversity, inclusion, and antiracism. The People subcommittee looks at ways of building a diverse and inclusive Embassy team through staff hiring, procurement, and interactions that aim to include the community as a whole. Finally, the Mission subcommittee focuses on promoting diversity and tolerance outside the Embassy, with our Kosovan partners.

Through the D&I Council's work, the Embassy has already made improvements: increasing understanding of equal employment legal requirements, providing lessons on how to apply job openings at the Embassy, and increasing knowledge about contract bidding, and employment opportunities with minority communities. The Council also works on identifying non-governmental and governmental organizations that assist those most discriminated against, and works to promote their causes. The Council also spearheaded translation of the ERA Applicant User Guide into Albanian and Serbian as this could make a large difference in the applicant pool for hiring.

Within the Mission, in partnership with the Management and our Community Liaison Office, the Council just launched a Mentoring Program for the first time. This program will bring together people with different viewpoints to share personal and professional knowledge and engender friendship. Soon, the Council is planning to launch the Cross-Cultural Sponsorship Program, designed for the Embassy community to provide cultural mentorship for the staff through strengthening intercultural and cross-cultural understanding in the workplace, and improving the mission through their work in various agencies and sections.

Externally, working with the Public Diplomacy Section, the Council promotes shared values of diversity and inclusion with the Embassy's social media audiences. In addition, the Council works closely with the Local Staff Committee to better understand the needs of local staff and to create avenues for joint initiatives to further bolster diversity and inclusion



Ambassador Kosnett: Enjoyed discussing diversity and inclusion initiatives with U.S. Embassy council members across the region. My thanks to our inspirational guest speakers. Brave, energetic leaders like Diellza Geci and Andjela Mirkovic make me excited about #Kosovo's future. Building bridges between communities is only the first step towards inclusion. To truly benefit from diverse opinions and backgrounds, we need to encourage people to walk across those bridges, forging lasting bonds.

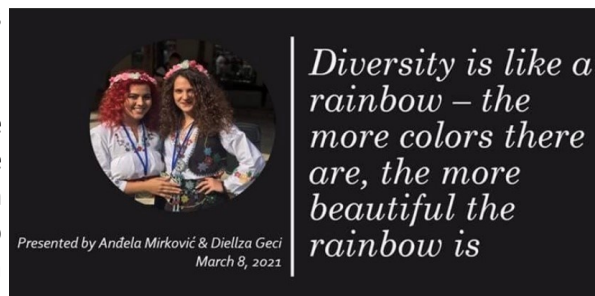


Photo courtesy of Diversity and Inclusion Council.

within the embassy community. Moreover, the Council supports the Embassy Youth Council, bringing together youth from different backgrounds from across Kosovo together to focus on common interests and activities.

The Pristina Council is part of the EUR Diversity and Inclusion Councils and contributes to discussions around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

If you would like to partner with the Diversity and Inclusion Council, have ideas to share, or you would like to volunteer to join the team, please contact the council at PristinaDICouncil@state.gov.

How To Petition for An Immigrant Visa

This article is for US citizens who would like to petition for their relatives to immigrate to the United States. It is possible to petition on your own for a relative to immigrate to the US. This is our recommended path. You may also hire, at your own cost, an immigration attorney or an immigration service provider to guide you through the steps. There is a [step by step guide](#) provided by the Department of State. This guide includes all forms to fill out, all documents for petition, and how to pay. It describes which actions you complete, and which your beneficiary completes.

All petitions are initiated by the US citizen and may [be completed online](#). Except in very limited circumstances described [here](#), all petitions must be completed and sent in from US territory. Make sure you put a proper email address and physical address in your petition. These will be the locations US Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the Department of State will be contacting you at – for clarification, approval, or refusal.

Once the petition is approved, it moves from USCIS to the National Visa Center (NVC). NVC will contact you for payment and

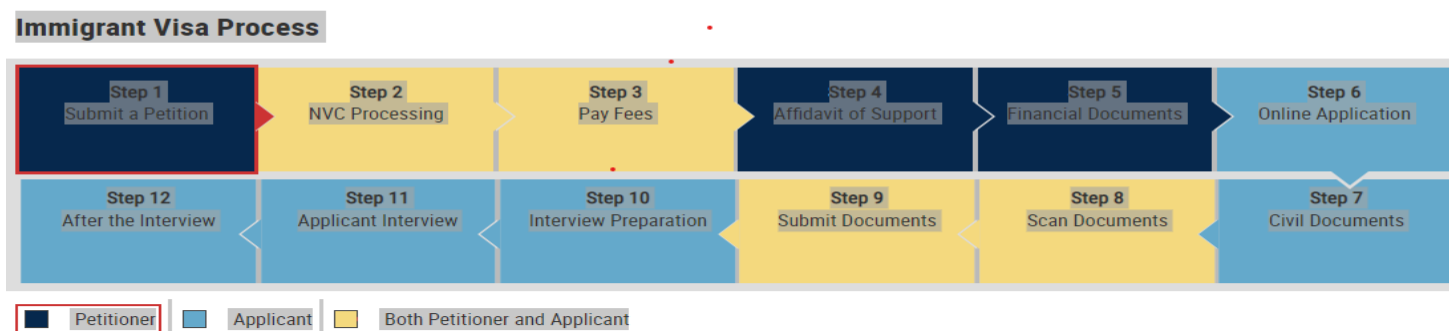


Photo courtesy of travel. State.gov.

more documentation. You can check on where your case is in the NVC process on the [NVC Timeframes](#) page. To pay your fees, you must have a US savings or checking account including routing number.

Part of the application process is taking financial responsibility for your beneficiary. You must show that you (and possibly a joint sponsor) are able and willing to support your beneficiary if he or she cannot self support. The form to show this is I-864. Do not fill out and send in this form until NVC asks you to.

Once you have completed all this, it becomes time for your beneficiary to do his or her part. You, basically, are done. The only other part you will need to do is, after an interview is set, you will need to upload copies of documents to your case before the interview.